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ABSTRACT

This document advocates special observances at school as a way of honoring the nation's people and teaching respect for others in the context of multiculturalism. The introduction provides general advice on maximizing the impact of special observances. Section 1 cites ways of stimulating interest such as showing films, and displaying posters, photographs, and objects of historical significance. Section 2 sketches ways of gathering information, for example, by providing students with background information, inviting guests from the ethnic community, taking the class on a field trip, and having students analyze news and entertainment media for stereotypes. Section 3 outlines ways of expressing new knowledge through, for example, having students present panel discussions, plan a parade, and perform dramas and music. Section 4 lists the following major observances, along with resources: (1) Afro-American Black History Month; (2) National Women's History Week; (3) Asian/Pacific American Heritage Week; (4) Hispanic Heritage Week; (5) Native American Day/American Indian Day. General resources from the National Education Association are also listed. Section 5 provides activity and program guidelines for Black History Month. An appendix lists appropriate documents, events, organizations, and personalities. (RDN)

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Office For Equity Education's
Multicultural Education Resource Series

Special Observances Honoring Our Nation's Peoples

A Generic Approach

AD 024 348

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A NOTE TO THE READER AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Principals, teachers and curriculum developers/program planners face a challenge each time a special event such as Cinco de Mayo and Women's History Week occur. The reality is that preparation time and available resources are often limited if available at all.

This publication is an attempt to assist educators by presenting a generic approach to such meaningful and potentially effective instructional mechanisms such as Black History Month.

The observance of Black History Month is presented as a model for educators to follow in the observance of other special events. It is recognized that although special events present unique teaching and learning activities within the school and classroom, the ultimate goal is to infuse all subjects with a multicultural perspective throughout the school year.

We are appreciative of the continuing leadership efforts of the National Education Association through its Human and Civil Rights and Professional Library Units. The information presented in the article, "Nation of Originals" was prepared by Jane Power and published in NEA Today, January/February, 1983, pages 12-13.

We are appreciative, also, of the state-wide efforts of the Washington Education Association through its Human Relations/Instruction & Professional Development Unit.

We are fortunate to benefit from the expertise of a number of colleagues in the institutions of higher education such as Dr. Jane Brem and Dr. James Banks of the University of Washington. Dr. Jane Brem prepared the Activity and Program Guidelines for Black History Month.

A number of Washington State school districts celebrate various ethnic traditions which are the key to our diversity. We appreciate continuing advocacy for these critical multicultural perspectives.

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INTRODUCTION

Special observances honoring our nation's peoples can teach respect for others all year round. These celebrations are fun, they break the routine of school, and the moment they seize students' attention is a moment for some extra thinking and extra learning.

How can you create and use these special moments? You won't have to depart much from familiar techniques. On these pages, you'll find ideas for applying well-known teaching methods to ethnic and women's celebrations.

As you begin planning an observance, be sure to emphasize that any general ethnic category - for example, Asian/Pacific Islanders - includes people with a wide range of geographical, cultural, educational, political, and economic backgrounds. A Samoan and a Korean will bring to the United States two very different sets of traditions and experiences.

If the special observance lasts only one day, spend some time leading the class up to it and later reviewing what they've learned. The day itself must be the high point of a longer experience or its lessons will quickly be forgotten.

Involving more that just one class is another way to give the observance greater impact for everyone. Have the principal or the student council proclaim the observance of Hispanic Heritage Week or Native American Day or whatever. All the teachers, regardless of grade level or subject, can tell their classes something relevant to the observance. During Women's History Week, for example, teachers can mention Emmy Noether's contribution to mathematics or Kyung-Wha Chung's talent on the violin. Some classes may want to perform a brief play for their schoolmates. Or the whole school may put on a program for the community.

Arousing parents' interest is another way to give impetus to your projects. Before the observance, send a note home explaining what the class will be doing and invite parents to attend any public programs the students are planning. Then, if parents ask their children, "What did you learn in school today about Afro-Americans?", students may catch their interest in the observance.

Finally, consider the two kinds of students who may be in your class: those from within the group the class is celebrating, who will be especially sensitive about the observance but won't necessarily have much special knowledge about their group, and those from outside the group, who may not even be curious about it - or may, on the other hand, be prejudiced against it.

As always, then, the make-up of your class will affect how you approach the subject. Here are some techniques teachers have recommended, with examples from celebrations of Afro-Americans, American Indians/Alaska Natives, Asian/-Pacific Islanders, Chicano/Hispanos, and women.

The suggestions fall into three general categories: stimulating interest, gathering information, and expressing new knowledge. A given item can, of course, fit into more than one category - for example, you could use the same film either to arouse interest or to provide information.

- Show a film, filmstrip, or videotape - either documentary or fiction - on history or a current problem. For Afro-American History Month, for example, you can stir interest in the civil rights movement with a film on the leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr. - maybe "King: Montgomery to Memphis."

- Display posters about the "old country" - or about demonstrations for civil and human rights.

- Exhibit photographs - for example, nineteenth-century life in a Chinese-American community.

- Show objects of historical significance (such as American Indian ceremonial clothing) or traditional objects still in everyday use (such as Indian pottery or blankets).

- Discuss an item currently in the news - perhaps an opinion poll about the group you're studying: a study of the group's unemployment, income, or education; a report on self-help efforts; or a statement by a political or other leader.

- Debate a feature film playing locally or a current TV program. Does it include members of the group the class is studying? If so, how does it present them - as stereotyped, as superhuman, as completely assimilated, or as people with a background and a character of their own?

- Ask students to share information about their backgrounds. Where had their ancestors come from when they arrived in North America?

- Discuss the nature of the United States and its peoples. Different people have compared this country to a melting pot, a salad bowl, a quilt. Following the discussion, as a project, young children might make quilt squares from paper of many colors, dark and light. As the variety of shade and hue gives the quilt much of its beauty, they can learn that the variety of our peoples gives our nation much of its liveliness and vigor.

- Ask students, "If you were going to settle in a new country, what would you want to take along? What would you tell your children about this country? What customs and holidays would you preserve?" Then stretch students' imaginations further, asking, "If you were coming to North America from Spain in the sixteenth century, say, or from Vietnam in the twentieth, what objects and ideas would you try to preserve?"

GATHERING INFORMATION

- Provide students with background information, perhaps on the historical importance of the date or period you're celebrating, the country the group came from, the way the group arrived here and the reasons they came, or the situation of the group at present.

- Invite guests from the ethnic community to tell about their own experiences or to perform (and maybe teach) traditional music, dances, or crafts.

- Take the class on a field trip. This might be a tour of local monuments connected with the group's history (perhaps a shop once owned by a free African merchant or the school once attended by a prominent Chicano, or, in cooperation with local Indian leaders, an Indian cemetery). Or pre-arrange a class visit to a part of the community where members of the group are concentrated today.

- Assign independent or group research in the school media center or the local library - perhaps to study the journals of immigrants, gather newspaper reports, examine poetry or fiction written by the group's members, or listen to records of the group's music.

- Have students conduct interviews about the personal experiences of group members - either local people (perhaps in students' families) or more distant but well-known or knowledgeable people (reached by phone or letter).

- Designate students to survey people in the local community about their attitudes towards the group or about their own backgrounds.

- Ask students to request materials from organizations representing the group the class is studying (for example, the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History in Washington, D.C.) or from companies that offer materials about the group.

- Have students collect magazines and newspapers published for members of the group, such as the Chicano-Hispano periodical Aztlán.

- Have students analyze news and entertainment media (including novels), perhaps with a checklist to help find stereotypes and misconceptions.

- Have students present a spectrum of opinions through panel discussions, debates, or symposiums.

- Assign individual oral presentations, research papers, and creative writing projects. Projects might include writing a newspaper report for a significant date in history - e.g., May 5, 1862, when Mexican forces expelled foreign troops from their soil for the last time; writing a diary - for example, of an Alaska Native either today or a century ago; writing imaginary letters - maybe between a 19th century Chinese railroad worker in Utah and his wife back in Nanking.

- Plan a parade, with banners, costumes, large pictures, kites, floats - whatever you can organize to show the past and present of the group you're celebrating. The parade route could be through the school corridors or - with suitable permission and publicity - through the streets.

- Give a party that features the group's foods, costumes, and music. The guests might be other classes, parents, or people from the community.

- Have students perform music, dances, or dramas of the group. This, too, could be a public event for the whole community.

- Help the class create objects - for example, pictures, quilts, sculptures, mobiles, scrapbooks, banners, puppets - to be used in exhibits or performances for the whole school or the community.

Whatever occasions you choose to celebrate with your students, you can go on teaching respect for others all year round. Perhaps some of the suggestions for special observances listed here will also find a place in your classroom on an ordinary day.

The roots of our nation are diverse. Listed below are several of the major observances and resources you can use in your classroom to honor these beginnings.

FEBRUARY

Afro-American "Black" History Month

Afro-Am
910 S. Michigan Avenue, Suite 556, Chicago, Illinois 60616
(312) 922-1147
Books, records, cassettes, and posters about Black Americans.

Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History
1407 14th Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005
(202) 667-2822
Publications, study kits, and pictures about Afro-American life and history.

Baylor Publishing Company & Community Enterprise, Inc.
Route 1, Box 200, Vashon Island, Washington 98070
(206) 567-4014
Golden Legacy Books, posters

The Western Journal of Black Studies
Heritage House, Black Studies Program
Washington State University, Pullman, Washington 99164-3310
(509) 335-8681

MARCH

National Women's History Week

Feminist Press
Box 334, Old Westbury, New York 11568
(516) 876-3086
Books, curriculum materials, and teaching guides dealing with women's rights.

TABS
744 Carroll Street, Brooklyn, New York 11215
(212) 788-3478
Books, posters, quarterly journal (TABS: Aids for Ending Sexism in Schools).

National Women's History Project
P.O. Box 3716, Santa Rosa, California 95402
(707) 526-5974
Resource catalog

The Co-Respondents
c/o Pat Larson, 223 W. 19th, Olympia, Washington 98503
(206) 943-0911
Live presentations, videotapes and audiotapes

MAY

Asian/Pacific American Heritage Week

ARC Associates, Inc.
310 8th Street, Suite 220, Oakland, California 94607
(415) 834-9455
Bilingual, multicultural teaching materials.

JACP, Inc.
414 E. 3rd Avenue, San Mateo, California 94401
(415) 343-9408
Books, audio-visual materials, and teaching kits about Asian Americans.

SEPTEMBER

Hispanic Heritage Week

Congressional Hispanic Caucus
H2-557, Washington, D.C. 20515
(202) 226-3430
Proclamation for Hispanic Heritage Week and monthly newsletter, "Avance".

National Council of LaRaza
1725 Eye Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
(202) 293-4680
Reports, issue briefs, and manuals about Chicano-Hispano cultures.

Native American Day/American Indian Day

There is currently no national American Indian Day. A number of states have Indian observances, however, most at the end of September, some in May. Several bills have been introduced in Congress to declare a national day; only one passed. That bill declared May 15th as American Indian Day. It was never reintroduced.

Congressional bills have focused on making the 4th Friday in September American Indian Day or the last week in September Native American Awareness Week. Some Indian organizations, notably the American Indian Association in 1915, proclaimed these observances. Celebrate People, 1983 publication available from NEA Human and Civil Rights, highlights them.

The Indian Historian Press
1451 Masonic Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94117
(415) 626-5235
Semi-monthly newspaper and 30 books about American Indians.

Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Department of the Interior
Public Affairs Office
Code 130, 1951 Constitution Avenue N.W., Washington, D.C. 20245
(202) 343-7445
Informational packets and brochures about American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Daybreak Star Press
United Indians of All Tribes Foundation
Daybreak Star Cultural-Educational Center
Discovery Park, P.O Box 99253, Seattle, WA 98199
(206) 285-4425
Films, videos, books, guides, manuals, games and other learning aids.

GENERAL RESOURCES FROM NEA

NEA Human and Civil Rights
1201 16th Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 822-7700
Packet of ideas for sponsors of or participants in ethnic, minority, women's, or international observances, Celebrate People.

NEA Professional Library
P.O. Box 509, West Haven, Connecticut 06516
(203) 934-2669
Multi-ethnic and women's rights materials, including Roots of America (Stock No. 1373-5-OD, $5.95), a multi-ethnic resource guide for seventh to ninth grade teachers, and The Architecture of Pluralism (Stock No. 0565-1-1D, $7.50), cassette tapes of Asian/Pacific Islander, Black, Chicano-Hispano, and American Indian educators.

ACTIVITY AND PROGRAM GUIDELINES FOR BLACK HISTORY MONTH

February is designated as Black History Month. This statement is intended to provide guidelines for planning school activities to commemorate contributions of Blacks. (Note: Though specific resources are mentioned as examples, this listing is not exhaustive. These guidelines are intended to serve as a catalyst for ideas rather than be a definitive, comprehensive list.)

The following five considerations merit attention. Principals, teachers and curriculum developers/program planners are encouraged to reflect upon these ideas before involving pupils in activities.

CONSIDERATION 1 - ESTABLISH A CLEAR RATIONALE

Effective programming reflects a clear, sound rationale. Thus, program planners need to specify goals and clarify objectives for celebrating Black History Month. Key points to keep in mind while making these decisions include the following:

- Will activities be managed in individual classrooms and/or will each classroom contribute something towards an all-school program?
- Will programming focus on American Blacks or have an international scope?
- How will activities go beyond collecting factual knowledge? That is, how will activities get participants to consider the implications of events? (It is one thing to know Martin Luther King was assassinated on April 4, 1968. It is quite another thing to be able to discuss how his death impacted the Civil Rights Movement. Even primary youngsters are capable of discussing their feelings regarding the loss of an important person.)
- Considering the voluminous nature of information and resources, set realistic expectations for your goals. Draw upon resources that are available in your locale. Initial contacts would include:
    - * school librarian
    - * public librarian
    - * local historical societies
    - * history professors at nearby community colleges and universities
    - * local Black artists and performing arts groups
    - * Black residents of community
    - * local Black organizations

- Recognize the potential for programming to reinforce stereotypes. To counteract the negative ramifications of this possibility, plan programs with a broad scope. Rather than focus on exotic characteristics of Blacks, emphasize the common needs all human groups share. Incorporate experiences of common folk as well as heroes and heroines. Investigate the universal aspects of experiences instead of concentrating on only the differences of experiences.

- Balance cognitive, affective and skill objectives.

CONSIDERATION 2 - CLARIFY CONCEPT OF "HISTORY"

Students need to recognize the value of history--how events of the past can help us in the present and future.

- Have pupils write about what happened in class in the past hour, yesterday or a week ago. Have students share what they wrote. Then use the following questions to facilitate discussion:

    * How were descriptions similar?
    * How were descriptions different?
    * How well could we re-enact what went on in the classroom from the descriptions?
    * Why is history characterized by the adjectives "incomplete" and "interpretative"?
    * How is Black history different from history?

CONSIDERATION 3 - PLAN ACTIVITIES APPROPRIATE TO GRADE LEVEL

Gear activities to students' interests and abilities. Also consider teachers' interests and areas of expertise. Some possibilities follow:

- Primary

    * Organize an ABC display of Black Americans. Have each poster identify an individual (emphasizing a letter of the alphabet), illustrate the individual or related event and provide a brief biographical sketch. Exhibit on bulletin board or showcase.
    * Plan a puppet show that retells a Black folktale.
    * Demonstrate games of Black origin.

- Intermediate

    * Interpreting the poetic works of Nikki Giovanni or Langston Hughes, present a choral reading program.
    * Interview Black members of the community to gain an understanding of how a Black's experiences differ from and are similar to a non-Black's experiences.

* Construct a collage according to a particular theme of Black history. (If you have difficulty finding pictures of Blacks, securing copies of Ebony and Ebony, Jr. may be helpful.)
* Dramatize an event. (See Appendix) Be certain participants and viewers recognize the implications of the event.
* Research events and persons. (See Appendix) According to pre-established guidelines, each student is responsible for a particular event or person. Compile all students' work into a class book or filmstrip.

o Junior High/Secondary

* Give background of music originating in Black communities. Share examples via musical recordings and/or student performance.
* Using guidelines to identify racist literature, analyze the contents of library books and texts.
* Conduct a survey regarding people's reactions to renaming "established" streets/parks/buildings after Black individuals.
* Conduct research, as described in the intermediate section above, with a greater level of sophistication.
* Study a significant issue, such as the racial riots of the 1960's, from the perspectives of different social scientists. An example of a focal question for various social sciences follows:

Anthropology - What aspects of Black culture became apparent during the riots?
Economics - How was the production of goods and services affected during the riots?
Geography - Where were Black communities located and why?
History - What factors changed to promote tensions for rioting?
Political Science - What power relationships existed within the Black communities at the time of the riots?
Psychology - How have the racial riots affected the Blacks' self-concepts?
Sociology - How did the riots affect Blacks' roles in the community?

o Daily/Weekly/Schoolwide

* Each day read a segment of a novel such as Sounder over the public address system.
* Each week have a storytelling assembly featuring literature written about or by Blacks.
* Plan a lunch or dinner of authentic foods indigenous to Black communities. Give background of the menu.
* Have students write 60-second "personality spots" of Blacks who have made a contribution to society. Have pupils read them daily over the public address system.
* Show a film appropriate to program theme. Afterwards, have a panel discussion about ideas and issues raised in the film.

CONSIDERATION 4 - ASK QUESTIONS THAT PROMOTE HIGHER LEVEL LEARNING

When questioning students in groups, be alert to whom you direct which questions; that is, address questions to students in accordance with their capabilities with potential for challenge. For example, an insecure pupil would likely be able to correctly respond to a question asking how many people are shown in a picture; a self-confident student, on the other hand, might find that question "too easy", but be challenged by an inquiry to tell what a particular illustrated individual felt and why.

Good "starters" for questions to promote intellectual growth include:

- Why...?
- Under what circumstances...?
- How can you tell that...?
- How would you compare...?
- What are probable causes and effects...?
- What would happen if...?

CONSIDERATION 5 - INCORPORATE A VARIETY OF RESOURCES AND STRATEGIES

Resources:

- Reading Materials
    - * Texts
    - * Reference Books
    - * Trade Books
    - * Pamphlets
    - * Newspapers
    - * Magazines
    - * Documents
    - * Primary Resources
- Audio Visuals
    - * Transparencies
    - * Films
    - * Filmstrips
    - * Slides
    - * Study Prints
    - * Tapes
    - * Recordings
    - * Videotapes

- Maps and Globes
- Games and Simulations
- Community Resources
    - * People
    - * Places

Strategies:

- Read
- Write
- Interview
- Demonstrate
- Dramatize
- Observe
- Exhibit
- Listen
- Illustrate
- Construct
- Pantomime
- Role Play

The writer attributes the underlying philosophy of these guidelines to Dr. James A. Banks, Professor of Social Studies Education and Ethnic Studies at the University of Washington.

APPENDIX

DOCUMENTS/EVENTS/ORGANIZATIONS

Ku Klux Klan
Civil Rights Acts of 1866 and 1964
14th and 15th Amendments
Fugitive Slave Act
Dred Scott Decision
Confiscation Acts (1861 and 1862)
Emancipation Proclamation (1863)
Plessy vs. Ferguson (1896)
Brown vs. Board of Education (1954)
Kerner Commission
Congress of Racial Equality
Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History
Marches on Washington (1963 and 1983)
Voting Rights Act (1965)
Racial Riots (1965-68)
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
Montgomery Bus Story
Southern Christian Leadership Conference
Black Panthers
People United to Save Humanity
Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

PERSONALITIES

Hank Aaron - Baseball Star
Kareem Abdul-Jabbar - Basketball Star
Muhammad Ali - World Heavyweight Boxing Champion
Marian Anderson - Concert Singer
Louis Armstrong - Jazz Musician
Arthur Ashe - Wimbledon Tennis Champion
Crispus Attucks - Patriotic Leader
Benjamin Banneker - Scientist, Mathematician
Mary McLeod Bethune - Educator
Gwendolyn Brooks - Writer
Edward Brooke - U.S. Legislator
Blanche K. Bruce - U.S. Legislator
Ralph Bunch - U.N. Diplomat
George Washington Carver - Scientist
Ray Charles - Singer, Pianist, Composer
Shirley Chisholm - U.S. Legislator
Eldridge Cleaver - Activist
Dean Dixon - Conductor
Frederick Douglass - Abolitionist
Charles Drew - Surgeon
W.E.B. DuBois - Author
Duke Ellington - Composer, Orchestra Leader
Ella Fitzgerald - Jazz Vocalist
Marcus Garvey - "Back-to-Africa" Leader
William Lloyd Garrison - Abolitionist
Nikki Giovanni - Poetess
Dick Gregory - Entertainer, Civil Rights Activist
Langston Hughes - Poet
Jesse Jackson - Minister, Civil Rights Activist
Mahalia Jackson - Gospel Singer
Reggie Jackson - Baseball Star
Scott Joplin - Ragtime Composer, Pianist
Barbara Jordan - U.S. Legislator
Coretta King - Human Rights Leader
Martin Luther King, Jr. - Civil Rights Leader
Jacob Lawrence - Artist
Thurgood Marshall - U.S. Supreme Court Justice
Willie Mays - Hall of Fame Baseball Player
Lucretia Mott - Abolitionist
Rosa Parks - Activist in Bus Boycott
Gabriel Prosser - Slave Organizer
Adam Clayton Powell - U.S. Legislator
Jackie Robinson - Hall of Fame Baseball Player
Wilma Rudolph - Athlete
Sojourner Truth - Abolitionist
Harriet Tubman - Abolitionist
Nat Turner - Slave Organizer
Denmark Vesey - Abolitionist
Booker T. Washington - Educator
Phillis Wheatley - Poetess
Stevie Wonder - Musician
Andrew Young - Politician
Malcolm X - Orator

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SPI

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